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Program aids Indians

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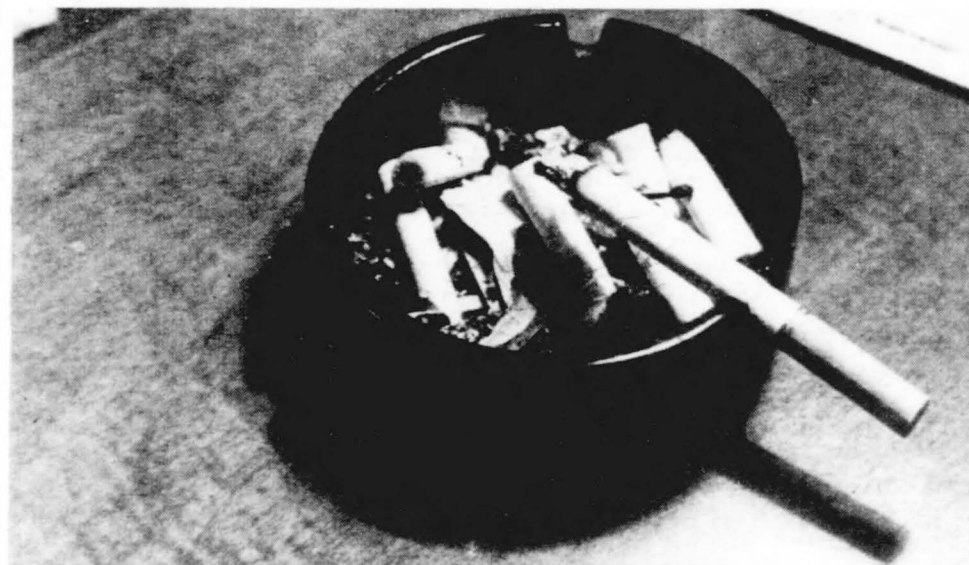
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People everywhere will be encouraged to put away their cigarettes and contribute to the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 19, sponsored by the American Cancer Society (see story on pg. 2) (Jim Fossett photo)

Program aids Indians

by Robin Stoutamyer
Staff writer

Indian Programs and Services is working with 88 UMO and BCC students, other Maine college campuses and all Indian communities in the state to create a better understanding of Maine Indians.

Ted Mitchell, the assistant dean of student affairs for Indian Programs and Services, is the only professional Indian educator at the college level. His office (Indian Programs and Services) is the only one of its kind in the state.

"I work with students," Mitchell said. "The office was created to assist Indian students enrolled with support, counseling, tutoring and academic assistance."

The program provides information about the university to high school Indian students, counsels Indians on career education and conducts orientation for Indian students.

The Indian program also works with older Indians. Workshops and programs have been created to help older Indians improve math, reading and writing skills. Older Indians are also prepared for higher education courses, Mitchell said.

The university department also is being helped to develop courses to

prepare Indians for careers in technical areas such as administration, child care, community health and geriatrics. The academic departments of the university are being urged to include courses in Indian history, folklore and culture, Mitchell said.

The program began in 1973 when Mitchell joined the Onward Program as a counselor for Indian students. While he was working for Onward, the Indian enrollment increased because "there were more students in high schools. They focused here because an Indian was here to work with them," Mitchell said.

The program grew, and Thomas Aceto, the vice president for student affairs, moved Mitchell into a separate office near the student affairs office because of the increasing Indian population enrolled at the university, Mitchell said.

The Indian Program is "working with residents of Indian Island along with the cooperative extension and the College of Life Science and Agriculture to develop a word harvesting training program," Mitchell said. "This will include preparation as to how to use new forestry equipment, safety, repair, operation and proper forest techniques."

Mitchell has also conducted a three-week course in audiology for Indian Island residents.